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ABSTRACT

The booklet provides suggestions for parents to encourage their children to read and develop good study habits. Suggestions for the child's early years include speaking to the child as you would an adult, naming things in the home or labeling each item, reading to the child everyday, playing simple games with the child to teach them numbers, colors, and names, and showing the child reading is important by reading often yourself such as newspapers, magazines and novels. For the first years of school parents should keep up with the child's progress in school, contact the child's teacher, help your child with homework whenever possible, set aside a place for your child's work, and have the child read books to you. During the upper grades children may need extra encouragement and help to do their studies. Parents can give their child the best opportunity for learning by keeping a dictionary in the home, not letting the child watch TV all evening, putting aside 1 1/2 hours each night for study time, playing games to help the child learn skills, showing a good attitude towards school, praising the child when he/she does something well, and showing the child everyday you are interested in him. (ERB)

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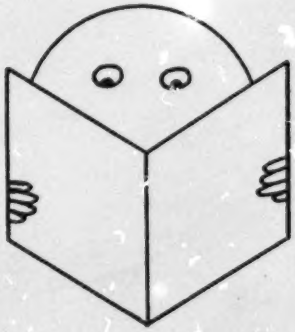

a parent's guide

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TO READ OR NOT TO READ:

A PARENTS' GUIDE

Reading affects our lives in many ways. Every day we read something. We read newspapers, road signs, bus schedules, job announcements, stories, menus, ads, poems, insurance claims, and so on. Good reading skills are very valuable for everyone. The earlier we begin to develop these skills, the richer our lives will be. The time to begin to instill good reading habits in your children is before they enter school. Then, all through school, you as a parent should continue to encourage your child to read and develop good study habits.

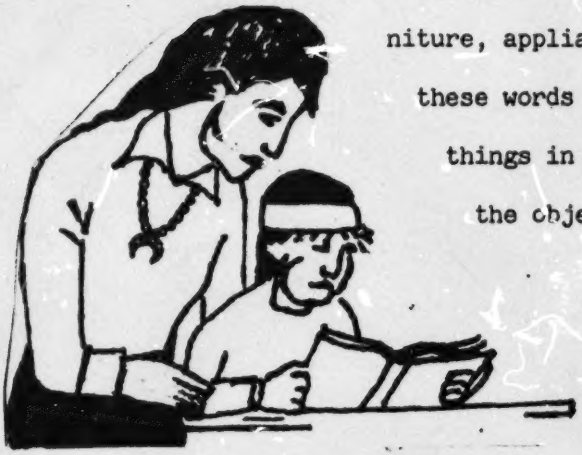
Here are a few suggestions:

The Child's Early Years

Even before your child learns to read, he or she will form an attitude towards reading and towards using language skills. You want this to be a good attitude. So you should

encourage your child to express his feelings; this will help your child feel confident about using words. Talk to your child very often, but use the same voice as you do when talking to an adult--don't talk "baby talk" to a child. A child learns to speak by listening to you. Therefore, you should try to use good grammar or your child will pick up the mistakes, too.

Tell your child the names of things in your home--furniture, appliances, clothes--and repeat these words often. Put labels on these things in your home with the name of the object written on the label.



Read to your child, every day if you can. Read a simple story, a little poem or rhyme. If you can't afford to buy the books, you can borrow them from the library. If there is no library near your house, you can go to a used bookstore and buy paperbacks and comics for a very small price. Simple stories are best to read, such as the Walt Disney stories,

or collections of Indian legends, especially those written for children. After a few readings of the same tale, the child will get to know the story and may start filling in the words from memory. Later on he will pick out a few words by sight.

Play little games with your child to teach them numbers, colors, and names. There are Sesame Street games available in bookstores. Or have them count objects in your house, or fingers on your hand. Point to things and say the color. Use real objects when possible, but you can point to things in books, also.

Show your child that reading is important by reading often yourself. Newspapers, magazines, novels, comic books, and children's books should be present in your home. If your child sees you read, she or he will be much more likely to want to do it, too. Get picture books, records, color books, cut outs, and any kind of educational game you can get ahold of. Perhaps you can share games, records, and books with your neighbors.

The First Years of School

Keep up with your child's progress in school. Supervise

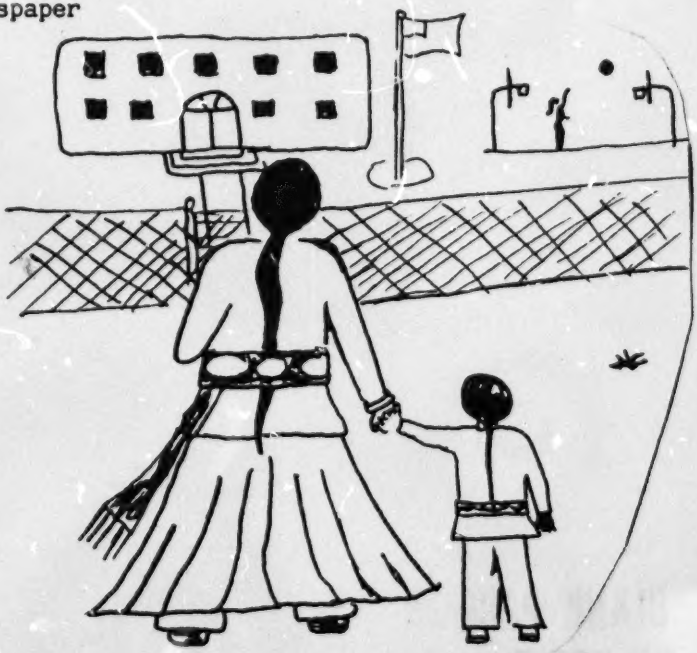
your child closely; make sure you know he or she is in school every day. How does your child feel about school? You should ask her frequently. How does she feel about each class, each teacher? What is she learning? What doesn't your child like? Look at your child's report cards and discuss the grades with your child. Praise good grades, but don't ignore the bad ones. Encourage your child to do better next time. Let your child know you're really interested.

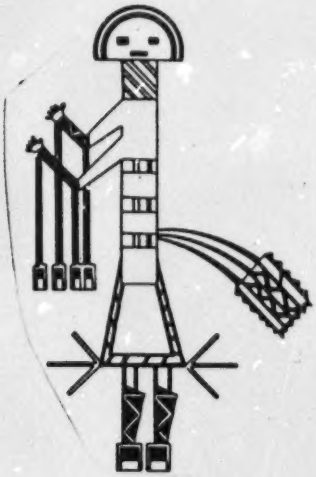
Contact the child's teacher, too. Do this at the beginning of the year, in the middle, and at the end, even if you have to make the call to the teacher. The teacher may forget to call you, but a teacher will almost always appreciate it if you want to discuss your child's progress. Ask the teacher what you can do to help your child in school.

Help your child with homework whenever possible. But remember two things: let him do whatever he can himself, and never try to answer a question you aren't sure of. Don't make up an answer. Your child will resent this if you give a wrong answer and he finds out later. Just say, "I don't know."

Set aside a place for your child's work. This could be a drawer, a trunk, or whatever. Your child will want to look at things he or she did earlier. Pin up good work on a wall or bulletin board at home. Have a space for books in your children's area, one or two shelves, and encourage them to add books of their own.

Get your child to read books to you. Ask him or her questions about it: how does your child feel about the story? What is happening in the story? What do the pictures mean? Read stories or newspaper articles to your child. Make sure they are short enough so your child does not lose interest. Talk about the pictures in the story or magazine.





Don't let your child watch TV all day. Studies indicate that children who watch alot of TV test poorly, do not solve problems very well, and are not as good at creating things. So if you don't have a TV, you're probably better off! Watching TV is a passive activity. Encourage your child to do active things: paint, draw, read, walk, play games, write a letter, swim, and so on. Help your child be creative. Get games for your child that require thinking.

Take your child to the library. Show him or her how to get a library card and a book. If you don't have one yourself, the librarian will help you. A card is always free to a resident of a town. Take your children to a park, to a zoo or a lake, to a museum, to a rodeo, to the movies, to a children's play. Take them on a camping trip or a picnic. These activities provide a good outlet for telling stories, playing games, and other creative activities.

The Upper Grades

Sometimes children need extra encouragement and help to do their studies. They often need to improve their study

habits. Good grades, or passing grades at least, are usually a matter of good study habits. Further, studies show that a parent's interest (or lack of interest) can greatly affect how well a student does in school. Here are some things you can do to give your child the best opportunity for learning:

1. *Keep a dictionary in your home.* Get a map of Arizona, also, and an atlas or wall map of the world, if you can. A set of encyclopedias is helpful; they can be bought second-hand or borrowed from the library. Keep school supplies on hand: pencils, pens, paper, a ruler, a compass, a slide rule, and colored pencils.

2. *Don't let your child watch TV all evening.* Let him only watch one or two hours at the most per day. Be aware of what kind of programs your child is watching. Educational shows are best. Encourage your child to do hobbies or artistic things instead.

3. *Put aside 1½ hours per night for quiet study time.* Make sure the TV or radio is not on. Do not let other brothers or sisters bother the one who is trying to study. The student should have his own little area. Make sure there is good light,

so the student will not hurt his eyes. Help your student only if he asks.

4. *Play games that help your child learn skills.* These can be traditional Indian games, or those bought in a toy store, such as Monopoly, Cribbage, Concentration, Sorry, Clue, Life, Backgammon, Parcheesi, Scrabble. There are many educational games put out for children of all ages now that teach them how to do arithmetic, tell time, sort colors, spell, etc. Go to a bookstore or toy store; ask the clerk.

5. *If you have a good attitude towards school, your child will probably feel the same.* Encourage him or her to participate in sports, band, drama club, or art; there may be an Indian club at the high school. Don't be afraid to talk to school officials and tell them what you want. You pay taxes and have a right to voice your opinion.

6. *Read an article from a newspaper to your child, and discuss it.* If you watch a program on TV with your child, talk to him or her about this, too. See if your child understands the nature of what he/she sees.

7. Praise your child when he/she does something well. Reward your child when she brings home a good report card, by taking her some place she likes to go, or buying her a little present. Let your child have special priveleges if he performs well in school, but take away these priveleges if he does poorly. Don't threaten to take away priveleges unless you mean to do so--make sure you always go through with whatever you say you will do. If the child does badly, talk to him or her and find out what's wrong. Talk to the teacher, also, to get another point of view. Then let your child know you will follow his homework very closely from now on. Do not ignore or let slip by a bad report card or grade; this will suggest to your child that you don't care and will encourage him to continue to work badly.

8. Continue to read as often as possible. This will set a good example for your child, and it's good for you, too!

9. Help your child make use of reading in daily life. See if she can read a recipe, put together a toy model, understand

a sewing pattern, read a map when you go on a trip. Make sure she or he knows how to telephone the police or fire department. Also, have your child write up a grocery list and go to the store with you in order to pay for the groceries and count the change.

10. Find out what's going on in town, and take advantage of these events. Take your child to the fair, to a pow-wow, to a ball game, to the circus. Do things often with your child, and make them give you suggestions sometimes. Take your children to the reservation nearest you, or to others in the state; go to the cultural center or trading post there, and teach your children about the tribe's history. If you don't know yourself, ask someone there! Or you can get a book on the tribe from the library.

11. Above all, be consistent. Don't tell your child one thing one day and something else the next day. Punish or reward your child very consistently. It will only confuse them if you don't, and they won't be able to grasp the standards for behavior you are attempting to provide them with.

12. Finally, show your child everyday you are interested in him. Many children do poorly in school, run away, or take drugs to "get even" with parents they think aren't paying any attention to them. Don't let this happen to you!

13. Involve your children in every practical application of reading, writing, and learning skills. Show your children these skills are needed, not only for school, but for everyday living and surviving. These skills will be needed and used for the rest of their lives.

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